



A Guide to Prayer
for the Gathering of
The Fellowship of Presbyterians

The Week of August 21-28, 2011

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*A Guide to Prayer
for the Gathering
of the Fellowship of Presbyterians*
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"But speaking the truth in love,
we must grow up in every way
into him who is the head, into Christ,
from whom the whole body
is joined and knit together..."
—**Ephesians 4:15-16**

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introduction

August 25-26, 2011, over 1900 Presbyterians will travel to Minneapolis to take part in a unique event in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The outcome of this event will be critical for the life, health, and future ministry direction of many congregations. This prayer guide is designed to assist all who are praying for this event, its leaders, and participants in saturating the Gathering in prayer.

This guide is designed to reflect three biblical realities:

1. in every circumstance and every season, it is right to give God thanks and praise;
2. everyone, regardless of their theological leaning, is guilty of faithlessness—no one is without fault for the weakness of the contemporary North American Church or the timidity of our personal witness; but
3. because of Christ Jesus we can be assured of God's pardon and certain of his continuing presence that shapes and directs our life together.

We desire, in the words of Calvin, “to trust in [God’s] power, to rest in his goodness, to depend upon his truth and to turn to him with our whole heart.” (From *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*.)

Contained in this guide are passages of Scripture for each day of the Gathering week along with suggested prayers. These are only suggestions, intended to encourage prayers directed by the Holy Spirit. Scripture quotations are from the New International Version, 2011.

May we come into this important week with thanksgiving, with hearts open to repentance and restoration, and with a deep desire for God to reveal our place in his plan and purpose. We long for God’s Kingdom to flourish and we believe Christ’s promise to be with us, even to the end of the age.

Indeed, come quickly Lord Jesus!

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
— 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Psalm 100

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
²Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.
³Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.
⁵For the LORD is good
and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues
through all generations.

Joel 2:12-17

“Even now,” declares the LORD,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and mourning.”
¹³Rend your heart
and not your garments.
Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
and he relents from sending calamity.
¹⁴Who knows? He may turn and relent
and leave behind a blessing—
grain offerings and drink offerings
for the LORD your God.
¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion,
declare a holy fast,
call a sacred assembly.
¹⁶Gather the people,
consecrate the assembly;
bring together the elders,
gather the children,
those nursing at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room
and the bride her chamber.
¹⁷Let the priests,
who minister before the LORD,
weep between the portico and the altar.
Let them say, “Spare your people, LORD.
Do not make your inheritance an object of
scorn, a byword among the nations.
Why should they say among the peoples,
“Where is their God?””

Matthew 28:19-20

“Therefore go
and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
²⁰ and teaching them to obey
everything I have commanded you.
And surely I am with you always,
to the very end of the age.”

repentance

Sunday August 21, 2011

praise – Read Ezra 3:11

Let us give thanks:
for the love of God we see revealed in tangible ways...
for the foundation laid for us in Christ Jesus...
for the same mindset as Christ Jesus who emptied himself...
for the faithful witness of the saints who have gone before...

petition – Read Revelation 2:1-7

The church at Ephesus had been built on a strong foundation but had wandered from its first love. As with the church in Ephesus, there are many strengths to celebrate in our local congregations and across the PC(USA). Yet, where has our initial love for Christ been diverted to other things? Let us repent, not simply on behalf of others whose sin we may more easily recognize, but let repentance begin in our own heart, asking Christ to reveal our own sin and help us to recognize the “log in our own eye.”

Let us repent of:
our complacency and disengagement with our denomination...
the inordinate value we place on programs and participation...
our tendency to regard prayer as just a supplement...
treating our brothers and sisters in ways that dishonor Christ...
allowing the culture to permeate the church in ungodly ways...
loving the American dream more than the Savior Jesus...
proclaiming the message of the cross without clarity and passion...

presence – Read Exodus 33:13-14

Let us pray:
for a teachable spirit...
for assurance that in life and in death we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ...
that we would trust the peace-giving presence of God at all times...
for God’s people around the world who suffer true persecution for the gospel...
for those who do not yet know Jesus Christ as Savior, or who have turned from him or been led away from the truth of his love...

Our Father...

Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?
Who may stand in his holy place?
⁴ The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.
⁵ They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication
from God their Savior.
⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, God of Jacob.
⁷ Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle. — **Psalm 24:3-8**

Ezra 3:11

With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: “He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever.” And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

Revelation 2:1-7

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. ² I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³ You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. ⁴

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. ⁵ Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. ⁶

But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Exodus 33: 13-14

If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.”
¹⁴The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

leadership

Monday August 22, 2011

praise – Read Psalm 19:1-4; 7-9

Let us give thanks:

for God's glory, revealed all around us...
for God's Word, at work in all his people...
for God's radiance that will lead and sustain us through this day...
for God's promise that we are more than conquerors through
Christ Jesus...

petition – Read Matthew 24:3-7; 12-14

We live in chaotic and unsettling times. We need leaders who can discern the times and who will lead with clarity, strength, and godliness. Let us pray particularly for our PC(USA) national leadership as well as those who provide leadership in The Fellowship.

Let us pray for:

wisdom in our leadership to exhibit the Kingdom of God...
a spirit that will glorify Christ in discussion and reconciliation...
vision to see God's future and the ability to communicate that
vision with hope and humility...
endurance and renewed spiritual vitality...
protection from the confusion and arrogance that fosters disunity...

presence – Read 1 Thessalonians 3: 12-13

Let us pray :

that God would increase our love for each other and especially for
those who are outside the reach of the Church...
that God's presence would be evident to all...
that the Holy Spirit will strengthen our hearts in times of
temptation and discouragement...
that our love for God would be revealed in holy attitudes and
humble behavior...
that those who lead Jesus' followers around the world would see
the Church increase in witness and service...

Our Father...

You have wearied the LORD with your words.
But you say, "How have we wearied him?"
By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of
the LORD, and he delights in them"....
Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.
— Malachi 2:17; 3:7b

Psalm 19: 1-4; 7-9

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

²Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

³They have no speech,
they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.

⁴Yet their voice goes out to all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are
trustworthy, making wise the simple.

⁸The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are
radiant, giving light to the eyes.

⁹The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

Matthew 24:3-7; 12-14

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of
Olives, the disciples came to him pri-
vately. "Tell us," they said, "when will
this happen, and what will be the sign of
your coming and of the end of the age?"

⁴Jesus answered: "Watch out that no
one deceives you. ⁵For many will come
in my name, claiming, 'I am the Mes-
siah,' and will deceive many. ⁶You will
hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see
to it that you are not alarmed. Such
things must happen, but the end is still
to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation,
and kingdom against kingdom. There
will be famines and earthquakes in
various places.... ¹²Because of the in-
crease of wickedness, the love of most
will grow cold, ¹³but the one who stands
firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this
gospel of the kingdom will be preached
in the whole world as a testimony to all
nations, and then the end will come."

1 Thessalonians 3: 12-13

May the Lord make your love increase
and overflow for each other and for
everyone else, just as ours does for you.

¹³May he strengthen your hearts
so that you will be blameless and holy
in the presence of our God and Father
when our Lord Jesus comes
with all his holy ones.

presbyteries

Tuesday August 23, 2011

praise – Read Psalm 68:26

Let us give thanks:

for how the praise and adoration of God arises in the life and worship

of presbyteries...

for how we experience the unity of the Holy Spirit in the work and worship of presbyteries...

petition – Acts 15:22-35

As congregations find it necessary to explore new relationships within and beyond their current presbyteries, let us pray that they would not be “burdened with unneeded requirements” (v. 28) and would find an “encouraging message” (v. 31) for the promotion and guided expansion of God’s kingdom.

Let us pray:

repenting of any bitterness and ungodliness we have brought into our life together...

that Christ would be honored in all conversations and decisions...

that together we will glorify God and exhibit God’s Kingdom...

for a spirit of mutual justice, fairness, and charity...

that each congregation may find freedom to respond in this challenging season through different Christ-honoring ways...

for strength, grace, and wisdom for [name(s)] as presbytery leaders...

for congregations who are struggling ...

for vision, wisdom, and persistence in the work of the Middle Governing Bodies Commission

presence – Read Revelation 4:9-11

Imagine the twenty-four elders as a representation of the councils of God’s people throughout history. Imagine this heavenly scene as the eternal purpose of our calling.

With that image in mind, let us pray:

that in all our presbytery deliberation, we would be aware of the presence of the One who truly reigns for ever and ever...

that we would relinquish our need to rule and control, deferring to the will and purpose of the Lord of all...

that presbyteries would once again become places of prayer, study, worship, nurture, and mission...

that we would listen to the admonition and encouragement of sisters and brothers called to ministry around the globe...

Our Father...

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. — **Hebrews 10:23**

Psalm 68:26

Praise God in the great congregation;
praise the LORD
in the assembly of Israel

Acts 15:22-35

Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers. ²³With them they sent the following letter... ²⁴We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you... ²⁸It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things...

³⁰So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. ³¹The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. ³²Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. ³³After spending some time there, they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. ³⁴But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

Revelation 4: 9-11

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: ¹¹“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

perspective

Wednesday August 24, 2011 – Preparation and Prayer

praise – Read Psalm 63:1-3

The psalmist is not in a good place. He would be undone if he limited his view of life only to what he could see in the moment. But he remembers that he has, at some time in his life, seen God. Remembering that, his life is recalibrated to an eternal perspective.

Let us give thanks:

- for times when we have seen God in the sanctuary...
- for the gift of God's perspective in our lives...
- for ways in which God enables us to give public witness to his grace and his glory...

petition – Acts 5:27-39

In the midst of wrestling with the "trees" of our personal context, it is easy to lose perspective on the "forest." We must guard against making too much of small things and not enough of big things. In the words of Gamaliel, we must "consider carefully what [we] intend to do." If we seek God's perspective, we will find it.

Let us pray:

- repenting of self-interest that blinds us to God's calling...
- that we would yield our hearts to God's will in every situation...
- that confusion would not obscure God's purpose...
- for wisdom and understanding in difficult conversations...
- for leaders to discern God's purpose and have the ability to lead God's people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love...
- that all who follow Jesus would die to self and be raised to new life in Christ Jesus each day...
- that all who will be watching the work of the Gathering might see a clear witness to the glory, majesty, and mission of God...

presence – Read Psalm 73:25-26

The psalmist is on the brink of physical and spiritual ruin as he observes the evil around him. But his life is preserved when he comprehends the presence of God even in this...even in this.

Let us pray:

- for calm in chaos that can only come as we follow where God leads...
- for those whose body or mind is failing and who need the embrace of their congregation to know the embrace of God ...
- for those who care for the suffering and watch over the dying ...
- for the ministry and love of deacons and ministers of care...
- that we would desire only God more than life itself...

Our Father...

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. — **Proverbs 3:5-6**

Psalm 63: 1-3

You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.

²I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.
³Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.

Acts 5:27-39

The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest.
²⁸"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." ²⁹Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings! ³⁰The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. ³¹God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. ³²We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." ³³When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. ³⁴But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. ³⁵Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men.... I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

Psalm 73: 25-26

Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire
besides you.

²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.

teaching elders (pastors)

Thursday August 25, 2011 – Day One of the Gathering _____

praise – Read Isaiah 52:7

Let us give thanks:

- for those who preach the Good News and live it...
- for commissioned lay pastors and bi-vocational teaching elders...
- for all who labor to proclaim God's Word with care, compassion, and conviction...
- for [name(s)] who have heard and responded to God's call and are now preparing for pastoral ministry...

petition – Read Matthew 6:25-34

Those who are responsible for teaching and leading God's people are also responsible for honoring their own personal calling and for the care and leadership of their families. As the Gathering begins today, let us pray for those who are called "pastor" or teaching elder.

Specifically remembering teaching elders, let us pray:

- repenting of the times when our message has not been centered on God's good news...
- that all who attend the Gathering would be refreshed and renewed in their sense of God's call upon their life...
- that they could shun anxiety, seeking God's Kingdom...
- for confidence as they discern God's plan for the congregations they are called to serve, for the companionship of ruling elders and ministry peers, particularly in congregations who welcome and embrace many different theological perspectives...
- that they would offer generous grace, unwavering conviction, and full-hearted love for all people ...
- for protection from cynicism, bitterness, and pride...
- that Christ-honoring connections may be formed or renewed in and beyond this Gathering...
- for [name(s)] and for the witness of Christ's servants worldwide.

presence – Read Revelation 1:1-3

Let us pray:

- that we discover God's witnesses in the messengers he sends...
- that we experience God's presence as we study his Word...
- that those who preach would first listen for God's word and will...
- for protection and encouragement for all mission personnel...
- for the witness of the Church around the world...

Our Father...

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. — Ephesians 3:20-21

Isaiah 52:7

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Matthew 6:25-34

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Revelation 1: 1-3

The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ²who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

ruling elders

Friday August 26, 2011 – Day Two of the Gathering

praise – Read Psalm 107:31-32

Let us give thanks:

that God’s unfailing love results in wonderful deeds...
for the wonderful deeds we have seen in our congregations
and in the lives and work of our ruling elders...
for congregations where God is praised in word and in action...

petition – Read 1 Peter 5:1-5

Ruling elders, like teaching elders, carry a burden for their fellow congregational members as well as for their pastors. As spiritual leaders, they share in the shepherding calling that includes setting an example in godliness. Many ruling elders are attending the Gathering.

Specifically remembering ruling elders, let us pray for:

repentance of spiritual leadership that has not upheld the vitality of
the call of Christ...
for strength, humility, and discretion that reflects love for all
people...
for clarity in discerning the path of faithfulness and integrity for the
congregation they are called to lead...
for a deepening in their life of prayer and the ability and desire to
offer spiritual leadership...
for mutually healthy and nurturing relationships with pastors and
other colleagues in ministry...
that Christ is honored by the spirit and intent of their leadership...
that Christ-honoring connections may be formed or renewed in and
beyond this Gathering...
for endurance throughout the long journey ahead...
for [names] who serve on the Session and councils known to you.

presence – Read Psalm 16:5-11

Let us pray:

that ruling elders would experience delight, not burden, as they
live into God’s call to service...
that they would praise God every day and keep their eyes always on
the revelation of God in his Word and in his Son Jesus Christ...
that they would be filled with joy as they serve God’s people in
God’s presence...
that elders would see beyond their local congregation
and marvel at the health of the gospel around the world...

Our Father...

The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you
from the evil one. — 2 Thessalonians 3:3

Psalm 107: 31-32

Let them give thanks to the LORD
for his unfailing love and his wonderful
deeds for humankind.

³²Let them exalt him in the assembly
of the people and praise him
in the council of the elders.

1 Peter 5:1-5

To the elders among you, I appeal as a
fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s
sufferings who also will share in the
glory to be revealed: ²Be shepherds of

God’s flock that is under your care,
watching over them—not because you
must, but because you are willing, as
God wants you to be; not pursuing dis-
honest gain, but eager to serve; ³not
lording it over those entrusted to you,
but being examples to the flock. ⁴And
when the Chief Shepherd appears, you
will receive the crown of glory that will
never fade away. ⁵In the same way, you
who are younger, submit yourselves to
your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves
with humility toward one another,
because, “God opposes the proud but
shows favor to the humble.”

Psalm 16:5-11

LORD, you alone are my portion and
my cup; you make my lot secure. ⁶The
boundary lines have fallen for me in
pleasant places; surely I have a delightful
inheritance. ⁷I will praise the LORD,
who counsels me; even at night my heart
instructs me. ⁸I keep my eyes always on
the LORD. With him at my right hand, I
will not be shaken. ⁹Therefore my heart
is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body
also will rest secure, ¹⁰because you will
not abandon me to the realm of the
dead, nor will you let your faithful one
see decay. ¹¹You make known to me the
path of life; you will fill me with joy in
your presence, with eternal pleasures at
your right hand.

struggling congregations

Saturday August 27, 2011

praise – Read Psalm 23

Let us give thanks:

for God's shepherding care and constant provision...
for the Shepherd's guidance and presence in the dark places...
for the Shepherd's abundance when resources seem inadequate...
that even in reduced circumstances, we lack nothing...
for the *koinonia* of the Body of Christ in congregations large and small...

petition – Read Matthew 9:35-38

There are many smaller membership congregations who find themselves largely disconnected from our denomination at large as well as from other congregations in their region. Some of these congregations are without sustained pastoral leadership. For such congregations, there may be a need for connection and counsel in order to move through these days with vitality in Christ-honoring ways.

Let us pray:

for repentance of our disinterest in building relationships with one another, especially with those who are struggling...
for connection and fellowship that overcomes isolation, loneliness, and lack of direction...
for true unity through prayer, mission, and dynamic worship...
for understanding of the options emerging from the Gathering...
for a clear sense of call to faithfulness in every context...
for [name(s)] of congregations of any size who are struggling...

presence – Read Revelation 3:7-8; 10-13

Let us pray:

that congregations will be strengthened in hope, knowing the Lord of the Church will exalt them in their faithfulness...
that congregations who are divided theologically find unity in the mind and Spirit of Jesus Christ...
that smaller membership congregations embrace their mission and not bemoan their circumstance...
that larger membership congregations use their resources to plant and nourish new congregations for worship and mission...
that the promised return of Christ will strengthen all congregations; because of *that* day, they can live faithfully *this* day...

Our Father...

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. — **Galatians 6:9**

Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd,
I lack nothing.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
³he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Matthew 9:35-38

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Revelation 3: 7-8; 10-13

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. ⁸I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ¹⁰Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. ¹¹I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ¹²The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. ¹³Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

congregations around the world

Sunday August 28, 2011

praise – Read Nehemiah 8

Let us give thanks:

- for congregations in which we are enabled to hear and understand the Word of God...
- for the joy that God's Word can bring as we more fully yield to its claim upon us...
- for the mission that naturally flows from our gathered engagement with God's word...

petition – Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Congregations are generally a broad mix of broken, Christ-seeking persons who are attempting to build God's kingdom—together they are the bride Christ.

Let us pray:

- for repentance from a focus on Christian faith as a means to personal fulfillment at the cost of holiness and our identity as “strangers and aliens” (1 Peter 2:11)
- for clarity in communication between leaders and congregations...
- for prayer to saturate congregations, particularly intercession for teaching and ruling elders in these challenging days...
- for protection from bitterness, infighting, and divisiveness...
- for the ministry of the Holy Spirit, bringing healing where there is hurt, anger, and sorrow...
- for evil to be rejected, for Christ to be exalted, and for unity in Christ to be enjoyed...
- for the tireless care for widows, orphans, those who suffer, and the strangers in our midst...
- for [name(s)] congregation and their particular needs...

presence

“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. ⁵God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.” —Psalm 46:4-5

As we pray, let us remember that:

- God's Living Water brings gladness...
- God is in our midst...
- when dawn breaks, we shall see God, our help, our Redeemer and our sovereign Lord...

Our Father...

At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.
—Daniel 4:34

Nehemiah 8: 2-3, 5-6, 9-12

So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. ³He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law... ⁵Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. ⁶Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground... ⁹Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. ¹⁰Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” ¹¹The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve.” ¹²Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. ¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²²reject every kind of evil.